

Claims:

1. A system for providing information to motorists, comprising:
a programmable sign display placed in proximity to a traffic light, the programmable sign display being responsive to provide a display of information to motorists according to programming; and
a wireless interface between a communications network and the programmable sign display, wherein the wireless interface conveys programming from the communications network to the programmable sign display to provide the display of information to motorists directing their attention toward the traffic light.
2. The system of claim 1, wherein the programmable sign display provides a display of information to motorists in coordination with one or more states of the traffic light.
3. The system of claim 1, wherein the wireless interface is a cellular interface and wherein the communications network comprises a cellular telephone network.
4. The system of claim 1, wherein the programmable sign display receives power from a public utility, and wherein the system further comprises a battery backup that provides power to the programmable sign display upon losing power from the public utility.
5. The system of claim 4, wherein the programmable sign display sends a notice of power loss through the wireless interface.
6. The system of claim 1, wherein the programming comprises a text message corresponding to the information to be displayed.
7. The system of claim 1, wherein the wireless interface comprises an authentication system that authenticates an incoming message from the communications network.
8. The system of claim 1, wherein the wireless interface between the communication network and the programmable sign display sends a message over the communication

network that is indicative of a malfunction upon the malfunction of the programmable sign display occurring.

9. A system for providing information to motorists, comprising:
 - a programmable sign display placed in proximity to a traffic light, the programmable sign display indicating a particular radio frequency capable of reception by a radio receiver of the motorists; and
 - a radio transmitter that transmits a signal on the particular radio frequency being displayed by the programmable sign display for viewing by motorists as they direct their attention toward the traffic light, the signal corresponding to information relevant to motorists.
10. The system of claim 9, wherein the programmable sign display provides a display of information to motorists including the indication of the particular radio frequency in coordination with one or more states of the traffic light.
11. The system of claim 9, wherein the programmable sign periodically changes the display to indicate a different radio frequency, the system further comprising a second radio transmitter that transmits a signal on the different radio frequency being periodically displayed by the programmable sign display.
12. The system of claim 9, wherein the radio transmitter is located in proximity to the programmable sign display and traffic light.
13. The system of claim 9, wherein the information of the signal is advertising for at least one business located nearby the programmable sign display.
14. A system for providing visual information to motorists regarding an approaching emergency vehicle, comprising:
 - a programmable sign display placed in proximity to a traffic light, the programmable sign displaying textual information relating to the approaching emergency vehicle when a display instruction is received; and

a receiver in proximity to the programmable sign display that receives a particular signal sent from the approaching emergency vehicle upon the approaching emergency vehicle coming within range of the receiver and wherein the receiver generates the display instruction to the programmable sign display in response to receiving the particular signal.

15. The system of claim 14, wherein the programmable sign display provides a display of textual information to motorists relating to the approaching emergency vehicle in coordination with one or more states of the traffic light.

16. The system of claim 14, wherein the receiver detects the direction the particular signal is received from to determine the direction from which the emergency vehicle is approaching and wherein the instruction and corresponding textual information that is displayed indicate the direction from which the emergency vehicle is approaching from the perspective of a motorist viewing the programmable sign display.

17. The system of claim 14, wherein the textual information is a driving instruction.

18. A system for providing information to motorists regarding an approaching emergency vehicle, comprising:

a programmable sign display placed in proximity to a traffic light, the programmable sign displaying a driving instruction to motorists relating to the approaching emergency vehicle when a display instruction is received; and

a receiver in proximity to the programmable sign display that receives a particular signal sent from the approaching emergency vehicle upon the approaching emergency vehicle coming within range of the receiver and wherein the receiver generates the display instruction to the programmable sign display in response to receiving the particular signal.

19. The system of claim 18, wherein the programmable sign display provides a display of a driving instruction to motorists relating to the approaching emergency vehicle in coordination with one or more states of the traffic light.

20. The system of claim 18, wherein the driving instruction comprises a graphical element.

21. The system of claim 18, wherein the driving instruction comprises text.

22. A method of providing visual information to motorists on a programmable sign display placed in proximity to a traffic light, comprising:

receiving, by a managing entity, content to be displayed on the programmable sign display from one or more customers;

sending, by the managing entity, programming to the programmable sign display, the programming corresponding to the content provided by the plurality of customers; and

displaying the content on the programmable sign display in response to the programming received by the programmable sign display for viewing by motorists as they direct their attention toward the traffic light.

23. The method of claim 22, further comprising displaying the content on the programmable sign display in coordination with one or more states of the traffic light.

24. The method of claim 22, further comprising obtaining, by the managing entity, authorization from a governing entity to install and display content on the programmable sign display in proximity to the traffic light.

25. The method of claim 22, wherein programming the programmable sign display occurs as a result of a bartered exchange between the managing entity and the customers.

26. The method of claim 22, wherein the one or more customers comprise government customers and advertising customers.

27. The method of claim 22, further comprising:

sending, by the managing entity, self-promoting programming to the programmable sign display, the self-promoting programming corresponding to advertising for sales of content to be displayed on the programmable sign display; and

displaying the advertising for sales of content on the programmable sign display in response to the self-promoting programming received by the programmable sign display.

28. A method of providing a remote programming service for a programmable sign display located in proximity to a traffic light, comprising:

receiving, by a managing entity, content from a plurality of customers, the content comprising information to be displayed on the programmable sign display and information to be broadcast over a radio frequency capable of reception by a radio receiver of motorists;

sending, by the managing entity, programming from a user interface to a wireless interface of the programmable sign display, the programming corresponding to the information to be displayed on the programmable sign display;

sending, by the managing entity, information to be broadcast over the radio frequency to a radio broadcast system that broadcasts over the radio frequency;

displaying the information to be displayed on the programmable sign display in response to the programming received, the programmable sign display providing an indication of the radio frequency; and

broadcasting the information to be broadcast over the radio frequency from the radio broadcast system.

29. The method of claim 28, further comprising displaying the information on the programmable sign display in coordination with one or more states of the traffic light.

30. The method of claim 28, further comprising:

receiving a signal from an emergency vehicle approaching the traffic light; and
displaying information related to the approaching emergency vehicle on the programmable sign display.

31. A system for providing information to motorists, comprising:

a receiver that detects a signal provided by an approaching emergency vehicle and that generates a display instruction in response to detecting the signal; and

a programmable sign display placed in proximity to a traffic light, the programmable sign display providing a display of advertising information to motorists directing their attention toward the traffic light, the programmable sign display being responsive to the display instruction to provide a display of information relating to the approaching emergency vehicle.

32. The system of claim 31, wherein the programmable sign display provides a display of the advertising information to motorists in coordination with one or more states of the traffic light.

33. The system of claim 31, further comprising a radio broadcast system that broadcasts a signal on a radio frequency capable of reception on a radio receiver of motorists, the signal corresponding to information relevant to the motorists, and wherein the programmable sign provides a display of the radio frequency.